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per cent than if sent in special letters at other times. Second, if the receipt is sent with the book and the book is lost, the receipt is lost. If the receipt is sent in a separate, special letter, the author expects the book, watches for its arrival, and if it does not come informs the office, and usually in time so that the book may be immediately traced through the mails.

On all accounts it is better to send the receipt by a special letter independent of the book itself, and in advance of the book.

I am, yours cordially,

J. W. POWELL.

Our readers now have both sides of the question. Our own experience as to the ease of returning receipts, differs from that of the distinguished director of the U. S. Geological Survey. But if the department is satisfied with the system no one else need complain.

—:O:—

RECENT LITERATURE.

FORBES' *A NATURALIST'S WANDERINGS IN THE EASTERN ARCHIPELAGO*.¹—Though inferior in general scientific interest and literary execution to Wallace's *Malay Archipelago*, Mr. Forbes has produced an excellent book of travels, which we have read with much interest. Most of the islands visited by Wallace were also visited by our author, but the routes of the two travelers were in each island different. The book, as the author modestly states, is a transcript of the more interesting of the field-notes made during his wanderings, and is to be "considered" in the light of an addendum to Wallace's "model book of travel."

Besides his observations on the formation of the Cocos-keeling islands and numerous entomological and ornithological notes, the matter largely relates to the botany of these islands, as well as the manners and customs of the natives and mixed races with whom Mr. Forbes was in constant contact. No detailed account of the Timor-laut islands has appeared before that of Mr. Forbes, and little has been published on the inhabitants of the interior of Timor; and, by the way, a residence in Timor, owing to the deadly fever of the coast and the continual warfare between the different villages, was not found to be particularly comfortable. Indeed, considering coast fevers, insect pests, venomous animals, not to mention an occasional tiger, thieving natives, the liability of meeting Malays "running a muck," the jealousy and selfishness of native officials, and tropical heats, rains, earthquakes and an occasional volcanic eruption or cyclone, a naturalist's life in the East Indian archipelago has its lights and shades.

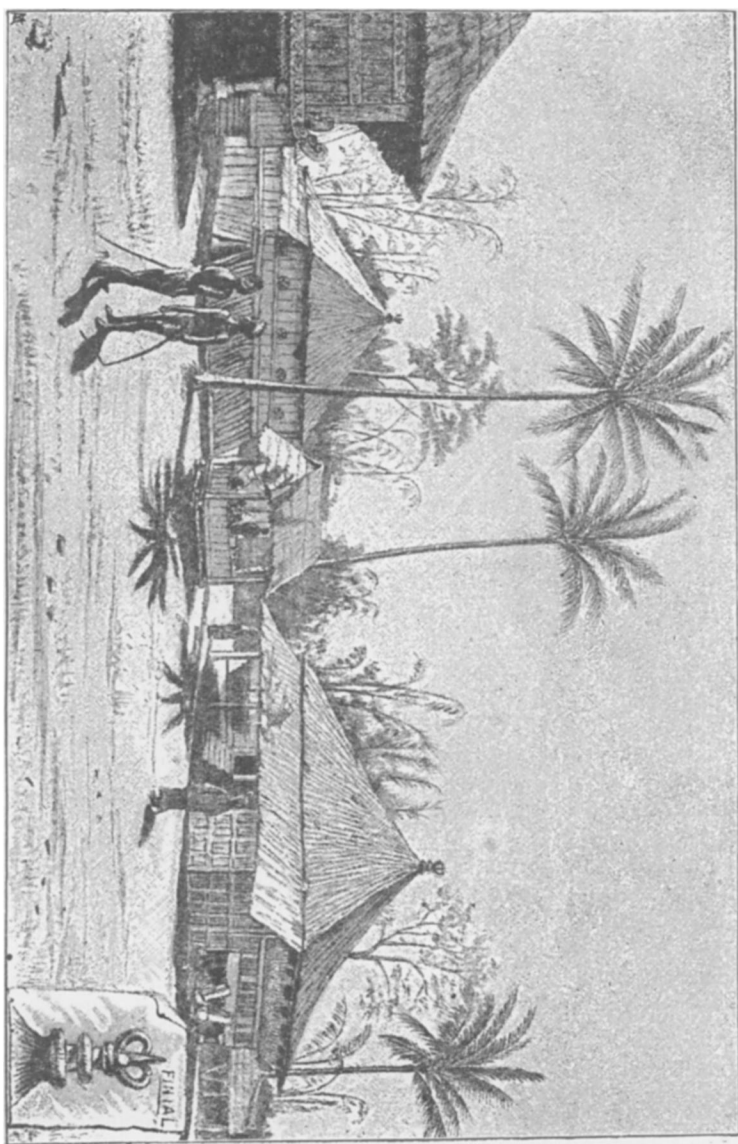
¹*A Naturalist's Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago*. A narrative of travel and exploration from 1878 to 1883. By HENRY O. FORBES, F.R.G.S., etc. With numerous illustrations from the author's sketches and descriptions, by Mr. JOHN B. GIBBS. New York, Harper & Brothers, 1885. 8vo, pp. 536.

Mr. Forbes' notes and conclusions as to the origin of coral reefs are of interest, as the subject is now under fresh discussion. Visiting the Keeling atoll nearly fifty years after Darwin, he found that the encroachments of the sea on the land "had not increased at all; on the contrary, it struck me that the land was gaining on the lagoon." Between Direction island and Workhouse island he observed what seemed to him signs of recent elevation. His conclusions are in the following words: "I incline to believe, therefore, that the Keeling-reef foundation has arisen as Murray, Semper and Agassiz have suggested; but that its islets have been the result of the combined action of storms and the slow elevation of the volcanically-upheaved ocean floor on which the reef is built."

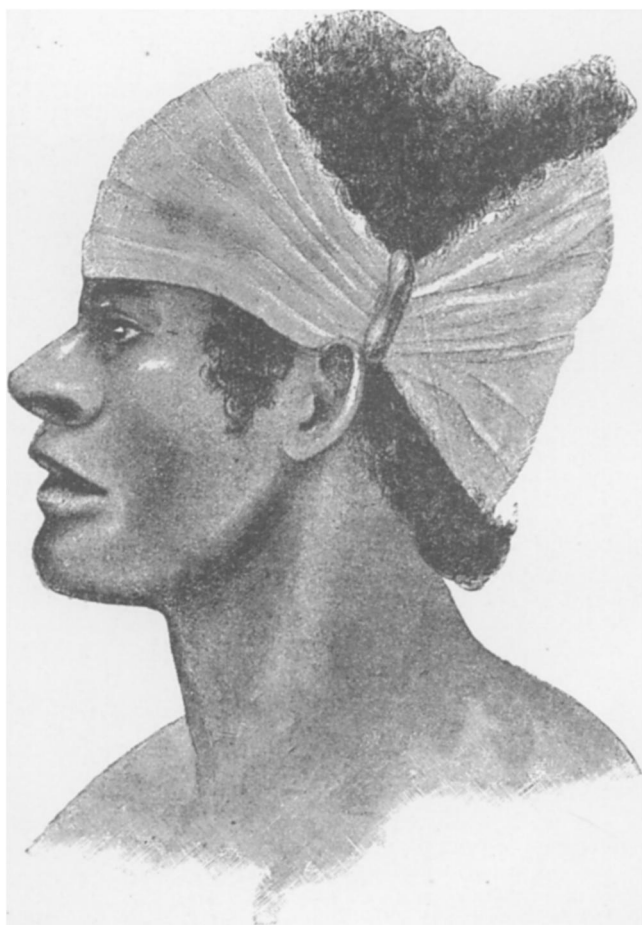
Among the notes on mammals is an explanation, new to us, of the use of the upturned and hooked teeth of the hog-deer (*Babirusa*). They are used, he was told by the natives, "to hold to the bottom of ponds by, when hard pressed by hunters."

The author's journey by raft, or *rakiting*, down the Musi river to Palembang was remarkably interesting, and the following extract will convey an idea of our author's powers of description when at his best, for at times his style is slovenly and ungainly:

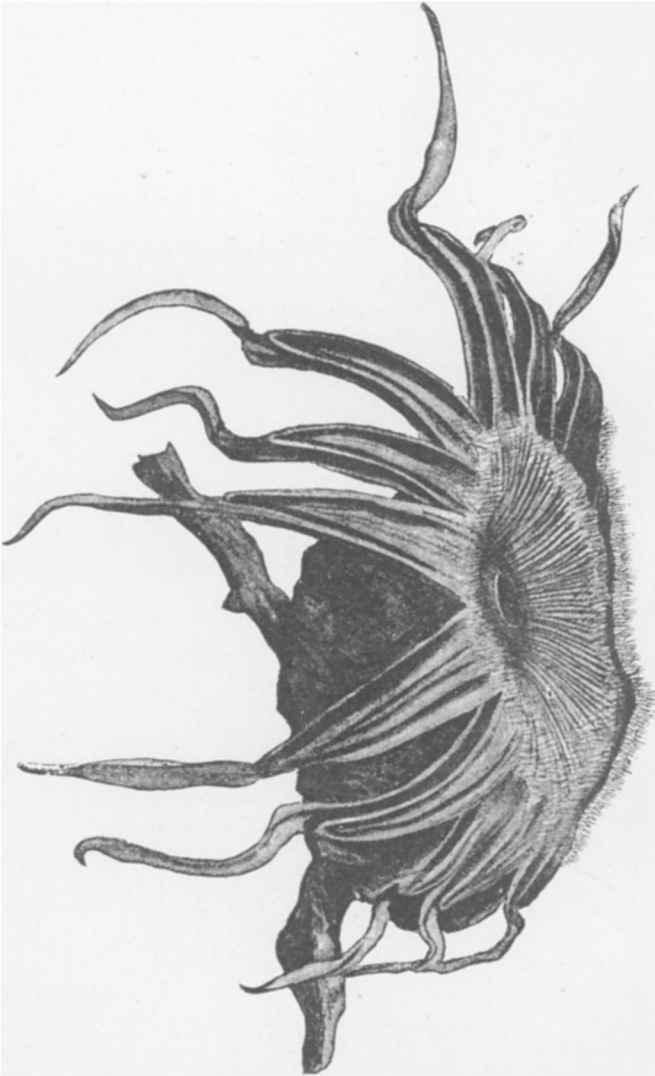
"To recall the magnificent flora of the upper reaches of the river almost makes me retract the statement that the tropics present few flowers; for so blossom-spangled a road it would be difficult to match anywhere;—it is only in the beginning of the wet season, however, and along the steep banks of some such river, wide enough to let in the sunlight and the free breath of heaven, that one must look for, or indeed expect to be able to see such a display. The singular trackless streets, roads and paths of water by which I rambled among the forest avenues are never-to-be-forgotten reminiscences; nor lower down the slow majesty of the widening river between its level banks fronted with tall reeds, dark-foliaged figs, and groves of *Eriodendron* trees, with their stiff trifid arms; and at last the broad expanse of its united affluents, by whose sources I had for so many months encamped, drawing towards itself the atoms of produce of two degrees of latitude, and concentrating them into a hot nucleus of commercial life and activity. Intermingled with all these memories are a thousand indescribable vignettes; miniatures of quaint works and sandy bays and embossed villages, of out-of-the-world ways and habits and customs, of the intermittent comers and goers; of the changing features of the river's face itself in wind and rain, in early morning or noonday sun, in evening shades, under the pale moon, and in the solemn silence of the darkness. Surveyed from my window in the intervals of occupation, or seated under the veranda in the cool evenings, this changing landscape of days and days (so placid and imperceptible was to me the motion of our gliding down, and so full



Village of Kenali.



Native of Wakolo Village, Lake Wakolo.



New species of *Brugmansia*, of the family of the *Rafflesiaceae*.

of that exhilarating relief from labor and fatigue) seemed to move past my eyes of its own accord, and afforded me a continued and massive sensation of delight that nothing could disturb, and which can be but faintly conceived by those who have not experienced this uncommon mode of travel which is absolutely different from that by any other water-carriage."

Unfortunately Mr. Forbes lost large collections of plants, and the zoological novelties he obtained were not of special importance. Descriptions by various specialists of the new forms discovered are added in fine print, with lists of plants, among them a new species of *Brugmansia* of the family *Rafflesiaceæ*.

The illustrations of such a book should be attractive, but on the contrary all are some sort of process work and are exceptionally coarse and unsatisfactory, as samples on Pls. xxxiv-vi. On the other hand the maps are frequent and well engraved.

THE REPORT OF THE FIFTY-FOURTH MEETING OF THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION.—One very tangible result of the last meeting of the British Association, held at Montreal in August and September, 1885, is a volume containing 980 closely-printed pages, besides more than 200 pages occupied by the table of contents, list of members, etc. More than forty reports upon the state of science, by various committees and individuals, and about 340 papers read in the various sections make a total too long for review, and the *NATURALIST* is therefore compelled to notice only a few of the papers read upon biological and geological subjects. Among these the report of Messrs. Etheridge, Woodward and T. R. Jones, upon the fossil Phyllopoda of the Palæozoic rocks (pp. 75-95), that of Messrs. Sorby and Vine upon the fossil Polyzoa (pp. 97-219), that upon the Zoological Station at Naples (pp. 253-263), that on the Archæan rocks of Great Britain, by Professor T. G. Bonney (pp. 529-551), and that upon the characteristics of the North American flora, by Professor Asa Gray (pp. 555-568) may be especially mentioned. A most thoughtful and pregnant article is the address of W. T. Blanford, president of the Geological Section. It deals with the startling exceptions to the rule that beds exhibiting "homotaxis," or similarity of fossil forms, are in reality contemporaneous. By a comparison with each other of the faunas of the Pikermi beds, of the Siwaliks, Gondwana and other fossiliferous strata of Hindostan, and of the Australian coal measures and associated beds, he proves that homotaxis or the want of it is not sufficient to prove the synchronism or lack of synchronism of beds situated in different parts of the world. No less than forty-eight papers were read in the Geological section, and are represented here by abstracts of moderate length.

The address of Professor H. N. Mosely, president of the Biological section, deals with the phenomena of pelagic and deep-sea life, the amount of oxygen, nature and quantity of food, zones of